

REMARKS

This is in response to the official action dated February 21, 2003. Reconsideration in view of the following is respectfully requested.

The claims have been amended throughout to provide for greater clarity, and to more clearly define the structural relationship among the various elements.

Further, claim 1 has been amended to recite details of the detector means and a means for independently adjusting flow.

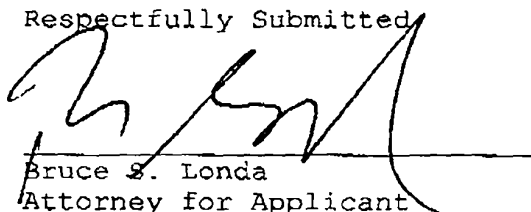
The examiner writes as to claims 1-21. However, the claims per the PCT IPER Annex are claims 1-17. The translation of the annexed claims was submitted with the entering of the national stage, and the preliminary amendment related to this version of claims 1-17. Therefore, this latter version is the present claim set. Applicant's current amendment and argument relates to this set as well.

Because of the differing claim numbering used by the examiner, applicant will address the cited references in general as applied to the present claims.

None of the presently amended claims are obvious, or anticipated, by either Stalling or Safir, or a combination of the two. Neither Stalling nor Safir teach a flow control system which comprises, separately for each line, a flow controller, total pressure meter and flow meter; nor a means for or step of

measuring the retention time and then adjusting the retention time so that it is the same in each line, by way of the flow controller based on data from the flow meter and total pressure meter in each line. The result is that applicant's device allows for multiple parallel separation of a sample under identical conditions (retention time), notwithstanding any individual differences in the parallel lines or columns. Nowhere do the cited references recognize this important issue, and therefore they can provide no suggestion for this advance. Accordingly, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Respectfully Submitted



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